

SHARING THE VISION

throughout the Wessex Synod

Issue 47: December 2011



FROM THE MODERATOR

Cliff Bembridge will be inducted at Portsmouth: Buckland on 10th December at 2.30pm. Martin Ambler retires from Bournemouth: Richmond Hill St Andrews on 31st December. Wonersh United Reformed Church has called Phillip Jones to be their Minister as from September 2012 when Marie Greenwood moves on.

THE ACT OF UNIFORMITY AND THE GREAT EJECTION

The Church of England and United Reformed Church are to hold an historic service in Westminster Abbey, marking a significant step forward in the development of a shared relationship. This will take place on **Tuesday 7th February 2012** at 18.15, in the year of the 350th Anniversary of the Act of Uniformity and the Great Ejection, as well as the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church. The service, arising out of the joint report 'Healing of Memories' which has been to General Synod and the United Reformed Church Mission Council, will be a service of Reconciliation, Healing of Memories and Mutual Commitment. There will be testimonies about martyrs of the past and stories of shared work in the present, leading to an act of commitment for the future. Tickets are available from the United Reformed Church Ecumenical Office, email ecumenical@urc.org.uk.

There is also a dedicated webpage on the URC website at http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/ecumenical/WestminsterAbbeyService with information that will be updated as time goes on.

The invitation is open to all those who would like to attend and we would obviously hope that as many people will come as possible so that there will be as many members of the United Reformed Church present as of the Church of England!

Strategy for delivery of ministry and leadership in Wessex Synod

The task group is grateful for the 33 responses we received from churches, groups and individuals to the strategy text presented to March Synod. We have completed a revision based on the issues raised, and a copy will be sent to all who responded, for their further comment if they so choose. In order to prepare material for March Synod 2012, we need any replies by January 9th.

If any other churches or individuals wish to have a sight of the draft at this stage, please contact me at peterpoulter@talktalk.net

WORLD CHURCH GROUP

Secretary - we are still looking for a Secretary. If you have an interest in the worldwide church and would like to join the Synod's World Church Group, please contact Martin Waldron on 023 8026 5588 for more information.

Zambia Link: In September, seven members of Chandlers Ford United Reformed Church visited their link church in Chilanga just outside Lusaka. Some of you may have heard just a little about their visit at Synod. Members of the Group are very willing to talk about their experiences and to show videos and photos. If you would like a visit, please contact Revd.

Tim Searle at minister@urc-chandlersford.org.uk or Martin Waldron at marjo42@homecall.co.uk to arrange a date.

Prayers – Christians make up about 10% of the population of Syria. There's no evidence to suggest they are being targeted but pray for peace in Syria and for the role Christians can play in bringing reconciliation to the warring factions there.

OLYMPIC GAMES 2012

A call has gone out for volunteer games pastors, who will play a leading role in responding to the practical and spiritual needs of the thousands of visitors attending the 2012 Games. More than Gold, which is enabling Churches to engage with the Games, explains: "Games Pastors will be wherever people gather in large numbers. They will be trained, equipped and supported to assist travellers, sightseers and spectators with practical advice and help. And all the while they will have an eye open for those who may be in particular need. Effectively, they will demonstrate the love of Christ on the streets and at transport terminals."

During the Games, vast numbers of visitors will be arriving at airports and railway stations, and thronging venues and the approaches to them; it is estimated that every day during the London Games up to 800,000 extra people will travel into London. Many – especially those who are vulnerable – will value the support of a friendly face and a caring attitude.

Games pastors will be trained by Christian agencies with experience and expertise in this field, including Street Pastors, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, London City Mission and Christian Nightlife Initiatives.

Francis Brien, The United Reformed Church's secretary for mission, who represents the URC on the More than Gold executive, said: "The games pastor programme is an exciting initiative, and we're keen for as many URC people as possible to get involved in it. Think about whether this could be for you; and if you know it isn't, please pass the information on to others who might be interested."

Full details, including a job description and an application form are here:

www.morethangold.org.uk/gamespastors Applicants must be committed Christians and will require the support of their church leader. Those with language or other particular skills are especially welcome.

The United Reformed Church is committed to supporting the mission and communications opportunities of the 2012 Games. Other ideas about what your church could do are here: www.morethangold.org.uk

CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS AND THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (2) comes into force on 5 December 2011. It allows religious premises to make an application to approve their premises as places where civil partnerships may be registered. However, it does not grant this as an immediate and automatic right for all religious premises. Clause 2d (3) of the regulations clearly states that: "An application made in respect of religious premises ... may only be made with the consent in writing of the governing authority of the religious organisation for whose religious purposes the premises are used."

For the United Reformed Church this means that United Reformed churches cannot have their application to register considered unless General Assembly has determined that they may do so. General Assembly meets in July 2012 and will consider the matter – and until then no United Reformed Church may apply to register civil partnerships on its premises. In July the Assembly has three possible determinations before it:

- To give consent for United Reformed churches to register
 - To withhold consent
 - To state that the consent of the Assembly is not required.
- For Local Ecumenical Partnerships the regulations will require the consent of the governing authority of all the partner churches.

Throughout the consultation process and the writing of the statute, the Government has made clear the voluntary nature of this legislation – it is on an "opt-in" basis and clearly states: (this legislation) "will clarify that there is no obligation on any religious organisation to host civil partnerships if they do not wish to do so." These regulations apply to England and Wales only.

For full details, see here: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/lgbt-equality-publications/civilpartnership-response>

CENTRE FOR REFLECTION, ASTON TIRROLD

Advent retreat - "*Watching and waiting*"

Take time out to be still, to rest and prepare for Christmas

Saturday December 3rd 10am to 4pm

LEADER: Becky Fisher Cost: £20 includes a light lunch.

For this also please book ahead by either leaving a telephone message on 01235 850423 or e-mail coordinator@reflect.freeuk.com or use the form on our programme leaflet.

The Coordinator, The Centre for Reflection, Aston Tirrold URC, Spring Lane, Aston Tirrold, Didcot, Oxon OX11 9EJ

PRAYER CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2012

Week beginning January :

- 1 Jersey, Weybridge; Tadley
- 8 Hythe; Valley Park, Chandlers Ford; Longfleet
- 15 Chertsey; Iford; Pear Tree Green, Southampton
- 22 Broadchalke, Salisbury; Milton. Portsmouth; Temple Cowley, Oxford
- 29 Ringwood; Twyford, (Bucks); Tilehurst, Reading

SUBSCRIBE TO THE WESSEX SYNOD E-NEWSLETTER

Don't forget that others in your church are welcome to sign-up to receive future editions of this e-Newsletter direct to their inbox (this may be particularly relevant for Elders and Magazine/Newsletter editors and others in leadership within your congregation). Tell them that they simply need to send an e-mail to the [Synod Office](#), and assure them that they'll not be bombarded with other unsolicited e-mails.

PLEASE SEND ITEMS FOR THE January 2012 Edition TO CAROL ROGERS : carannrog@aol.com by December 14th 2011.